THE COLONIAL INVENTION OF LANGUAGES IN AMERICA

Cristine Gorski SEVERO*

■ ABSTRACT: We aim at critically discussing the colonial process of language discursivization in America. Such discursivization integrated the Iberian colonial mechanism, centered in Spain and Portugal, from the sixteenth century on. The paper presents and discusses the way languages and people were put into discourses from a power framework centered on the logic of modernity/coloniality. Examples of this discursivization include the production of grammars, dictionaries, word lists, catechisms and the translation of religious and administrative European discursive genres to a non-European context. It is argued that the colonial discursivization of peoples and languages was framed by an Eurocentric interpretation which left its effects until today. The article relies on the theoretical framework of colonial Linguistics and Latin American postcolonial criticism, both focused on a historical and discursive perspective. Finally, we consider that the colonial experience is complex, which means that the colonial encounter produced the emergence of resistance and cultural hybridizations

■ KEYWORDS: Indigenous language. Portuguese. Spanish. Colonization. America. Christian missions.

Introduction

This article is based on the idea that America and its languages were invented in the colonial context. The perspective that takes America – and the languages spoken in this continent – as realities that were invented is allied to a postcolonial criticism of hegemonic and Eurocentric discourses and practices. This paper considers modernity and colonialism as mutually constitutive projects (O'GORMAN, 1958; MIGNOLO, 2005; QUIJANO, 2000). We also consider for the purpose of theoretical discussion the works on Colonial Linguistics (SEVERO; MAKONI, 2014; DEUMERT, 2010; MAKONI; PENNYCOOK, 2006; MAKONI; MEINHOF, 2004; IRVINE, 2008; MARIANI, 2003; ERRINGTON, 2001; FARDON; FURNISS, 1993, PHILLIPSON, 1992). From these critical perspectives, languages are taken as a product of colonial enterprise, which means that they are seen as a product of colonialism whose purpose

* UFSC - Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina – Departamento de Língua e Literaturas Vernáculas. Florianópolis - Santa Catarina - Brazil. 88040-900 - crisgorski@gmail.com

was to control people and lands: "[…] languages and their hierarchical organization always integrated the civilizing project as well as the idea of progress"[1] (MIGNOLO, 2005, p. 94, our translation). The discursivization of language in the colonial context – i.e. the practice of producing discourses on languages – produced differences, hierarchies and the naturalization of cultural and human inequalities (ERRINGTON, 2001).

Thus, the colonial discourses on languages are not neutral, but constitute a paradigm of modernity, which is strongly rooted in both Christianity and Enlightenment. This paradigm is a political colonial framework of exploration and control of land, people and languages. The colonial practice of naming and describing people and languages is political (FOUCAULT, 1999a, 1996) and inaugurated a typical way of producing discourses on the "New World", based on the European conceptual framework (O'GORMAN, 1958; GALEANO, 2014). Such discourses, in turn, made the trajectories and experiences of existing peoples and cultures invisible (LEITE, 1996), turning them into a target of colonizing and modernizing practices, such as Christianization, folklorization, scientification and schooling. Such practices produced specific colonial effects. Not surprisingly, in the African context, literacy and language education played an ambivalent role: as instruments of control and as a form of social emancipation (MAKONI, 2003).

In this article we intend to discuss the process of invention of languages by the modern and colonial enterprise, as well as to consider the practices of resistance against such enterprise. We consider as object of analysis the colonial experience that took place in the part of America colonized by Spain and Portugal, from the sixteenth century on. The historical perspective is justified because it enables a critique of colonial categories. Such historical view aims at making a revision of colonial framework from the perspective of the dominated people, as proposed by Mignolo (2005, p.17, our translation): "The perspectives of colonialism [...] arise from the 'colonial wound', the feeling of inferiority imposed on human beings who did not fit the predetermined model for Euro-American stories."[2] It is not our purpose to present a detailed historical perspective, but to comprehend how discourses on colonial experience built and legitimized a relatively homogeneous way of interpreting languages and colonized people. For doing so, we present and discuss a number of examples, from different discursive genres, which are taken as illustrative of the argument on the invention of languages. By doing so, we aim at submitting the logic of modernity to a post-colonial criticism. It is noteworthy, however, that the colonial experience can not be seen as a unilateral, one-way movement. Rather, colonialism involves various forms of resistance and subversion that emerge from colonial meeting (COOPER; STOLER, 1997).

---

[1] "*las lenguas y su organización jerárquica siempre formaron parte del proyecto civilizador y de la idea de progreso*". (MIGNOLO, 2005, p.94).

[2] "*Las perspectivas de la colonialidad [...] surgen de la 'herida colonial', el sentimiento de inferioridad impuesto em lós seres humanos que no encajan en el modelo predeterminado por los relatos euroamericanos.*" (MIGNOLO, 2005, p.17).

The article is structured as follows:

(i) the colonial context and the invention of America;
(ii) the invention of languages in the colonial enterprise;
(iii) the gaps and ambiguities of colonial device.

The colonial context and the invention of America

We argue that America and Latin America are colonial inventions, which means that the forms of their discursivization are strongly affected by the colonial dispositif[3] (FOUCAULT, 1999b). Such dispositif includes a wide and heterogeneous set of practices and discourses that comprise laws, documents, treaties, letters, cartography, travelers' notes, chronicles, artistic illustrations, grammars, dictionaries, word lists, translation of texts, invention and adaptation of alphabets, among others. Such discursive arsenal has contributed to the production of a colonial and colonialist perspective on the experiences in America, from the point of view of colonial agents. This colonial perspective was constitutive of the emergence and consolidation of European modernity in the sixteenth century, bringing together political, economic, religious and epistemological events around the emergence of "[…] a science of the gaze, of observation, of the established fact, a certain natural philosophy, no doubt inseparable, too, from religious ideology, the emergence of new political structures, also inseparable from religious ideology; this was, without a doubt a new form of the will to know"[4] (FOUCAULT, 1996, p.62). We consider that the "will to know" about languages in the colonial context brought together religious conversion and political domination, as we will illustrate throughout this article.

The critical perspective means to consider the political nature of the Iberian colonial device, based on Portugal and Spain. The nomination and description of colonial experience by colonial agents structured the idea of America in the sixteenth century:

> […] the key to solve the problem of the historical emergence of America was to consider this event as the result of an invention of Western thought and not as the result of a purely physical discovery, also made by chance (O'GORMAN, 1958, p.2, our translation)[5].

---

[3] A dipositif encompasses "[...] a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions–in short, the said as much as the unsaid" (FOUCAULT, 1999b, p. 244, our translation).

[4] *"[...] uma ciência do olhar, da observação, da verificação, uma certa filosofia natural inseparável, sem dúvida, do surgimento de novas estruturas políticas, inseparável também da ideologia religiosa: nova forma, por certo, da vontade de saber."* (FOUCAULT, 1996, p.24).

[5] *"[...] la clave para resolver el problema de la aparición histórica de América estaba en considerar ese suceso como el resultado de una invención del pensamiento occidental y no ya como el de un descubrimiento meramente físico,*

> […] the invention of America entailed the appropriation of the continent and its integration into the Eurochristian imagination (MIGNOLO, 2005, p.29, our translation) [6]

The colonial context which made the idea of America possible brought together discourses and practices centered on Portugal and Spain. This means that it was a period when a series of interconnected events were shaping the colonial experience: mercantilism, the expansion of trade routes in the era of great voyages, the expulsion of Moors and Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, the Portuguese and Spanish patronage, the emergence of bourgeoisie and of Protestantism and the Enlightenment. These events helped to constitute the framework from which the colonial experience was produced. Such experience included four interconnected spheres (MIGNOLO, 2005): (i) economic, by the appropriation of land and exploitation of labor through slavery; (ii) political, through the imposition of authority, violence and hierarchies; (iii) social, by controlling gender and sexuality; (iv) epistemic and subjective, through the appropriation and production of knowledge and ways of being.

Rationalisation of European States ran in parallel with the maritime expansion, consolidation of mercantilism, emergence of large territorial, administrative and colonial states, and the Reformation and Counter-Reformation movements that put into question the form of individual conduct (FOUCAULT, 1999a; SEVERO, 2013). It is about an Eurochristian perspective (GALEANO, 2014; MIGNOLO, 2005; LOURENÇO, 1992) that produced an intense range of discourses about the Other, characterized in the colonial context as the exotic or primitive.

More specifically in the colonial context, the driving force that led to exploration and invention of peoples and languages was a Christian impulse to convert and evangelize people, as can be noted in reports made by Christopher Columbus (1984, p.27, our translation):

> [...] Your Majesties, as Catholics and Sovereign devouts of the holy Christian faith, your enhancers and enemies of Mahomet sect and of all idolatry and heresy thought to send me, myself, Christopher Columbus, to the regions of India to go and see the so called princes, peoples, the disposal of their land and the way we could stick to their conversion to our faith; and they ordered that I did not go through the East, the usual path, but I should take West direction. [7]

---

realizado, además, por casualidad." (O'GORMAN, 1958, p.2).

[6] "[...] *la invención de América implico la apropiación del continente y su integración em el imaginário eurocristiano.*" (MIGNOLO, 2005, p.29).

[7] "[...] *Vossas Majestades, como católicos cristãos e Soberanos devotos da santa fé cristã, seus incrementadores e inimigos da seita de Maomé e de todas as idolatrias e heresias, pensaram em enviar-me, a mim, Cristóvão Colombo, às mencionadas regiões da Índia para ir ver os ditos príncipes, os povos, as terras e a disposição delas e de tudo e a*

This colonial dispositif of exploitation and control of the Other was productive since the sixteenth[th] century and put into function frameworks based on: (i) Catholicism, especially in missionary work, whose most intense period lasted until the end of Portuguese and Spanish patronage, in the eighteenth century; (ii) the European Enlightenment that characterized the emergence of Nation States; (iii) the scientific discourse about language, mainly the comparative philology and the language description of "exotic" languages, which gained visibility in European scholars' thought during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The practice of comparison and ranking of languages from a philological perspective, based on the naturalist concept of "language evolution" (ERRINGTON, 2001). Such political and epistemic practices are not mutually exclusive, but they reinforce each other.

The Catholicization of politics and the politicization of missionary Catholicism were two sides of the same coin in the Iberian colonial enterprise. Such practice was impacted by the medieval crusades that aimed at the expulsion of the Moors from the region: "The feat of discovering America could not be explained without the military tradition of the Crusades that prevailed in medieval Castile"[8] (GALEANO, 2014, p.30, our translation). In addition to the Crusades, another movement that influenced the Catholic expansion was the Counter-Reformation, a reaction of the Catholic Church against the Protestant Reformation that took place in the sixteenth[th] century. Examples of Catholic reaction against the emergence of a reformist strand were the emergence of *Society of Jesus* and the resumption of Inquisition. Great part of the evangelising missions in the Portuguese and Spanish colonies were linked to the Jesuit tradition established by the former Basque soldier Ignatius of Loyola, in 1539:

> […] the Jesuits released to the universe a network of missions, especially in China and in the two Americas. Their overall influence – some may call it as "policy" – continued to increase, thanks in particular to a kind of practice that had been established between the Catholic sovereigns of Europe: all, or nearly all, chose as main confessor a member of the Company of Jesus[9] (GUILLERMOU, 1973, p.132, our translation).

The rationalization of modern states, from the eighteenth century on, destabilized the relations between Christians projects (Catholic missions) and political projects (formation of secular states) in the European and colonial contexts. Spain and Portugal

---

maneira que se pudesse ater-se para a sua conversão à nossa fé; e ordenaram que eu não fosse por terra ao Oriente, por onde se costuma ir, mas pelo caminho do Ocidente." (COLOMBO, 1984, p.27).

[8] "*A façanha do descobrimento da América não poderia se explicar sem a tradição militar da guerra das cruzadas que imperava na Castela medieval.*" (GALEANO, 2014, p.30).

[9] "*Os jesuítas lançaram sobre o universo a rede de suas missões sobretudo na China e nas duas Américas. Acrescentemos que sua influência geral – alguns chamá-la-ão "política" – não cessou de aumentar, graças, em particular, a uma espécie de costume que se estabelecera entre os soberanos católicos da Europa: todos, ou quase todos, escolhiam como confessor titular um membro da Companhia de Jesus.*" (GUILLERMOU, 1973, p.132).

responded differently from other European countries to the State rationalization process, as we can note by the prologing of patronage system, a political and economic agreement of mutual support established between the Church and the Kingdom, which granted the Sovereign the power to appoint bishops and build churches. The patronage tied evangelization to a national project, in which conversion was also a task of the empire (NAVARRO, 2008; OLIVEIRA, 2008). In this context, the teaching of Portuguese and Spanish to Indigenous people (as part of a nationalist project) and the teaching of Indigenous languages to missionaries (as part of a Christian project) were concurrent during the evangelizing process. An example of Spanish patronage was the creation of 34 bishoprics by the Spanish reign in the colonies, between 1511 and 1620, especially in Mexico and Peru (COMBY, 2001). The end of the patronage system came only in the eighteenth century: in Brazil, the expulsion of the Society of Jesus by Marques de Pombal resulted from a Portuguese State rationalization process; in parallel, it was during this period that Portuguese was made official in Brazil by the *Directory of the Indians* in 1759, along with the establishment of secular education. The Jesuits were expelled from Spanish colonies in 1767.

Having made this historic presentation of the colonial dispositif centered in Spain and Portugal, in the next section we explore the process of invention of languages as a result of colonial encounters. We consider historical cotextualization important to understand the emergency of discourses on languages in the colonial context. The epistemic framework that produced knowledge about the Other binds to a given political, cultural and economic of the time.

The invention of languages in the colonial enterprise

In line with with O'Gorman's thesis (1958) about the invention of America, we propose a linguistic discussion based on the works of Colonial Linguistics (SEVERO; MAKONI, 2014; DEUMERT, 2010; MAKONI; PENNYCOOK, 2006; MAKONI; MEINHOF, 2004; IRVINE, 2008; MARIANI, 2003; ERRINGTON, 2001; FARDON; FURNISS, 1993; PHILLIPSON, 1992). From this perspective, languages are not seen as autonomous and abstract realities, waiting to be discovered and described. The very act of describing and naming is what makes it possible the invention of languages. An example of this invention was the production – according to a language policy of grammatization (AUROUX, 2009) – of grammars and dictionaries of exotic languages spoken in a colonized context, motivated by a Christian interest in local languages and people for evangelization purposes. Grammatization created conditions for the emergence of a number of genres written in local languages, through translation practices.

We argue in favor of the ideia that the "will to know" (FOUCAULT, 1999a) on language diversity in colonial context (SEVERO, 2013) is based on the same power-knowledge framework that led to the invention of America and Latin America.

Languages were taken as a colonizing instrument capable of being named, classified, described and transcribed according to a Latin model. For example, Manoel da Nobrega (1955, p.499), a missionary leader in the sixteenth century in Brazil, defended that the evengelist should know local languages for conversion purpose: "[...] *quantos estudiantes moços pudieren para acá estudar em nuestros collegios, porque en estos no ay tanto peligro, e estos juntamente van deprendiendo la lengua de la tierra, que és la más principal sciencia para acá más necessária*". Such *línguas da terra* (native languages) were learned through linguistic tools produced by missionaries for the purpose of conversion. Grammatization (AUROUX, 2009) of local languages, through the production of linguistic tools on these languages (grammars and dictionaries), created the conditions for the introduction of literacies in oral societies, as well for the hieraquization of (new) written practices in relation to oral practices. Translation of religious texts also played a central role in this process.

The interest for "exotic" languages was constitutive of the Catholic missions, as can be noted by the wide profusion of grammars, glossaries and word lists on Indigenous languages produced by missionaries in Latin America during the colonial period, involving a total of 33 languages with grammars and dictionaries in Spanish America by the end of the century; 96 languages in the late seventeenth century; and 158 languages in the late eighteenth (AUROUX, 2009; NAVARRO, 2011). Examples of language products in Spanish America included: the production of grammars, catechisms, sermons and theater in Nahuatl language in Mexico, and in Quechua in Peru (COMBY, 2001). The *Arte de la Lengua mexicana con la declaración de todos sus adverbios* (1645) was written by the jesuit Horacio Carochi, who produced the first grammar of Nahuatl according to the metalinguistic and descriptive Greco-Latin grammars model, with special focus on the description of the phological system of this language. In Peru, the *Gramática da lengua general de los índios de los reynos del Peru* was written in 1560 and systematized Quechua.

In the Brazilian context we can mention (i) the grammars of Tupi written by Priest Anchieta – a *Arte de grammatica da Lingoa mais usada na costa do Brasil* (1595) – and by Luis Figueira – a *Arte de grammatica da lingua brasilica* (1621); (ii) a grammar on language Quiriri written by priest Luís Vincencio Mamiani – a *Arte de grammatica da lingua brasilica da naçam Kiriri* (1699); (iii) the description of General Language of Mina, by Antônio da Costa Peixoto – the *Obra nova da língua geral de mina* (1731/1741). By way of illustration, in the context of Portuguese colonization in Africa, the translation of the first Bible for a Bantu language was made by a priest in 1642 (SPENCER, 1974). Furthermore, "[…] by 1957 there were probably between 8.000 and 10.000 missionaries, Catholic and Protestant, in Sub-Sahara Africa […] Perhaps fifty to sixty percent of missionaries in Africa can claim some competence in an African language." (WELMERS, 1974, p.192-193).

In dialogue with the objective of the article, we defend the idea that this intense discursive production of languages – grounded in a given framework of knowledge-

power – invented Indigenous languages, giving them names and alphabets and opening paths for the introduction of literacies in societies of oral tradition (MAKONI; MEINHOF, 2004; IRVINE, 2008). The general languages that were grammatized in Brazil by Anchieta and Figueira were, according to Mattoso (1975), the "Jesuit Tupi". They were languages invented for the the purpose of evangelization. Navarro (2011), on the other hand, relativized Mattoso's view by defending a certain originality of Anchieta grammar in relation to Latin grammar, by considering "specific phenomena" of Indigenous language. Navarro, however, recognizes the political use of Latin grammars metalanguage to encode local languages.

This intense production of linguistic knowledge by the Christian colonial enterprise was appropriated by the rational and national states as, for example, the idea of language as a unit, a product of colonial practices of nomination, differentiation and classification of languages (MAKONI; PENNYCOOK, 2006). The conception of language that framed the new Nation States was inherited from classical models and focused on the ideas of language as mirror of thought and language as mirror of national culture, confirming an overlap between language, culture and thought (HUMBOLDT, 2006).

The positivist conception of languages as fixed codes that were capable of being described, named, classified and divided into smaller units justified and legitimized the language policy of the National States. One example would be the political use of census and linguistic maps for the purpose of linguistic demarcation of ethnic groups in relation to the territories in African contexts (FARDON; FURNISS, 1993). It is all about the ideological use language as a criterion for ethnic differentiation, as we can note by the use of the term "ethno-linguistic" used to to differentiate and group people. The idea that languages name and assemble people in ethnic groups comes from the colonial enterprise, which tried to create differences where there were similarities and establish similarities where there were differences, such as the territorial demarcation strategy used by missionaries for political interests (MAKONI; MEINHOF, 2004).

This process of invention of languages in the colonial context from an Eurocentric framework can be considered as an example of epistemic, subjective and political colonization (MIGNOLO, 2005). However, the colonial process can not be seen as a unilateral imposition of ideas, values, behaviors and beliefs. It is about a complex process involving the conflicting encounter between different cultures and worldviews. Such meeting produced subtle forms of resistance and transgression by local people, as we may briefly present in the next section.

The gaps and ambiguities of the colonial dispositif

The colonial period in America, between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, produced a profusion of language tools, as well as translation of texts and Christian genres to Indigenous languages, which can be taken as colonial signs. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries we can still find religious interests in Indigenous languages,

as the Bible Society of Brazil. According to information posted on the website of this company, the Bible translation to indigenous languages involves knowledge of indigenous worldview and the standardization of local languages through the creation of alphabets. For doing so, it is required that the translators-missionaries know "[…] the cultural reality of the local population so that they may find within the language forms to explain the Scriptures." (Bible Society of Brazil[10]). Evidence shows that such missionary activity produced the translation of the Bible to 44 Indigenous languages. Although apparently this Christian interest may show contemporary motivations, one must take into account that shuch motivation must be seen in the light of contemporary political experience.

Regarding the colonial context, some examples are emblematic of the missionary work of translation. It was not only a matter of identifying a possibile linguistic correlation between languages, but of inscribing new ways of understanding and of social and verbal interaction in Indigenous culture. José de Anchieta, the most important translator, in the sixteenth century translated three European genres (ALVES FILHO, 2008): dialogues, lyrical and *autos* to Tupi General Language. The first, widely present in Spain, was based on Roman Catechism (as *Disputatio Puerorum*, in use since the eleventh century) and aimed at adjusting people's behavior to Christian morality. Lyrics were widely circulating literary genres in Europe – also known as song of settlers – that, by being translated to Indigenous language, brought into this culture Manichean Christian themes and compositional structure in the form of rhymes. The *autos*, which totalized eight productions by Anchieta, were inspired by Portuguese theater plays – mainly Gil Vicente's works – and included religious themes with a pedagogical tone, multilingual indigenous, biblical and historical characters, music and dance, in an attempt to incorporate Indigenous culture (ALVES FILHO, 2008).

These three discursive genres presented oral features, in line with the musical and oral traditions of Indigenous people. Anchieta translated to the General language the Iberian literary tradition: "In its poetry, rhyme, meter and rhythm are characteristic of Romanesque versification, but its sound comes from Tupi"[11] (ALVES FILHO, 2008, p.77). Although the mention to the sound of Tupi may appear a simple observation, it helps us to understand some gaps of this practice of translation that resist to colonial domination, operating as a place of resistance: sound plays a central role in the indigenous worldview. Another example of Christian oral genre translated to Indigenous practices is confession: in Brazil, Father Navarro was the first one to "listen" to confessions in Tupi, in 1551 (HUE, 2006). Nobrega also used Christians songs as strategy of evagelisation.

In Peru, Francisco Dávila (1646 apud COMBY, 2001) translated Christians sermons to Quechua Christians. Other translated genres included pedagogical

---

[10] Available at: <http://www.sbb.org.br/>. Access in: 20 mar. 2016.

[11] "*Em suas poesias, a rima, a métrica e o ritmo são característicos da versificação românica e a sonoridade é Tupi*" (ALVES FILHO, 2008, p. 77, our translation).

texts from Jesuit schools, texts of administrative communication, such as letters, instructions and documents sent to other Jesuits or to the Kingdom. Such texts were both founding of everyday administrative dynamics, and of a personal and corporate / institutional Jesuit identity (NELLES, 2014). The use of administrative and religious literacy practices in the colonial context was not restricted to European colonial agents, but it was appropriated by Indigenous people who have assumed administrative and religious functions in the colonial enterprise. Some prestigious administrative functions, related to accounting or auditing, required from Indigenous people a certain literacy in the eighteenth century: "Several Guarani people who were literate share similar qualities to those of clerks, mainly the ones who went through missionaries cabildos, ie, individuals who were prepared to administrative tasks"[12] (NEUMANN, 2007, p.59, our translation). In addition to these administrative genres, Guarani people from South America made use of other written genres such as diaries, letters, personal accounts and notes, written both in Guarani and Spanish. For example, the Indigenous leaders Chrisanto Nerenda, Pasqual Yaguapo and Valentin Ybariguá wrote texts of resistance against the Spanish rule, especially in the period of Guaranítica war (1750-1756) that was motivated by the new territorial demarcation proposed by the Treaty of Madrid (NEUMANN, 2007).

The colonial translation process included several strategies, such as approximating Indigenous and Christians myths. One example is the Indigenous myth of deluge, interpreted by Christians as being the biblical deluge, as signaled by Manoel da Nobrega (1955, p.440, our translation): "They have the memory of deluge, though falsely."[13] In addition to Christian interpretations of indigenous myths, the linguistic and discursive colonization also included lexical uses semantically marked by the Christian perspective, such as the creation of neologisms in Tupi language: the term *tupãoka* (Tupã + Oka) was renamed as "church" (Tupã's house) and the word 'hell' was translated as *Anhangá rata* (Anhangá fire) (ALVES FILHO, 2008). The translation process conducted by missionaries considered the Latin language as a linguistic model, as we notice in Manoel da Nobrega's view (1955, p.446) about the incompleteness of native languages in relation to European language: "*Tiene muy pocos vocablos para le poder bien declarar nuestra fe, mas com todo dámossela a entender ló mejor que podemos y algumas cosas le declaramos por rodeos.*" This "linguistic incompleteness" was also mentioned by Anchieta in his description of Tupi language: "Their pronunciation is subtle, they speak low that it seems they do not understand each other, they hear and penetrate everything; in their pronunciation they do not use F, L, Z, S and RR, and don't use the liquid as Bra, Craze"[14] (ANCHIETA, 1933, p.441, our translation).

---

[12] "*Diversos guaranis letrados manifestaram qualidades semelhantes às dos escrivães, principalmente os indígenas com passagem ou cargo nos cabildos missioneiros, ou seja, os indivíduos que foram preparados para as tarefas administrativas*" (NEUMANN, 2007, p.59).

[13] "*Eles têm a memória do dilúvio, embora falsamente*" (NÓBREGA, 1955, p.440).

[14] "*Na pronunciação são subtis, falam baixo que parece que não se entendem e tudo ouvem e penetram; em sua pronunciação não põem F, L, Z, S e RR, nem põem muta com liquida como Bra, Craze*" (ANCHIETA, 1933, p.441).

Another example of semantic translation is the word *yãmĩy*, from Maxakali language, translated as *spirit*. The Eurocentric dimension of this translation was reported by Andrade (2008, p.247, our translation): "That word, we know, does not reflect the richness of nature, this other spiritual geography. Worse than that, the word *spirit* is already contaminated by secular significance of Western culture, of Judeo-Christian culture"[15]. Considering the Maxakali's worldview, *yãmĩy* also means song. Such meaning reinforces the role given to songs in social practices and Indigenous epistemology. Musicality is so constitutive of the Indigenous universe. Notions of language and wisdom, for some ethnic groups, are connected to the songs, as highlighted by an Indian teacher from Yawanawá and Shawãdawa / Arara, in Acre (Brazil):

> For us, singing comes first. [...] He [the intelligent man] will sing the whole night for you to listen, saying words, but also singing. And they are the deepest words that every people have. Those are not the same words I use every day to talk to my wife and children, no ... So we believe that singing is the starting point of people ... who have much knowledge[16] (MAHER, 2010, p.43, our translation).

Colonial experience is not unilateral nor dichotomous, but complex and heterogeneous. It results from the encounter of cultures, subjects and discourses that produces, as a result, ambivalent and contradictory signs: "[…] colonial dichotomies of ruler and ruled, white and black, colonizer and colonized only reflect part of the reality in which people lived [...] these dichotomies took hard work to sustain, were precariously secured, and were repeatedly subverted." (COOPER; STOLER, 1997, p.34). The colonial encounter was based on violent and authoritarian acts and produced forms of resistance that were made invisible (LEITE, 1996) by hegemonic discourses, which favoured the emergence of hybrid speeches and practices as signals of resistance. Some examples are the various hybridization processes that affected languages, cultures, beliefs and institutions, as the contemporary Indigenous Portuguese (REZENDE, 2011), Indigenous literature (MUNDURUKU, 2008), Indigenous medicine (ANDRADE, 2008) and Indigenous Catholicism (ALVES FILHO, 2008). These are examples of practices and discourses that reveal an ambivalent and double-voiced sign, as we can notice in relation to Indigenous Catholicism: "[…] the results of transplantation of European religion to Indigenous imagination created, ultimately, a third religion or belief among

---

[15] "[...] *essa palavra, sabemos, não traduz a riqueza da natureza, dessa outra geografia espiritual. E o pior, ela, a palavra 'espírito', já vem contaminada pela significação secular da cultura ocidental, da cultura judaico-cristã*" (ANDRADE, 2008, p.247).

[16] "*Pra nós, cantar, ele tá em primeiro lugar. Não é igual a... a professora [faz]... Ele [o homem inteligente] vai cantar a noite inteirinha pra você escutar, falando as palavras, mas cantando também. E são as palavras mais profundas que cada povo tem. Que não é essa palavra que eu uso todo dia pra falar com a minha mulher, com os filhos, não... Então a gente acha que cantar é o ponto de partida das pessoas que... que TÊM muito saber.*" (MAHER, 2010, p.43).

the natives, which only the colonial situation made possibile"[17] (ALVES FILHO, 2008, p.97, our translation).

We argue that in colonial experience the process of "assimilation" of the Other's culture is not passive, which means that people affected by colonialism were also able to transform "authoritative word" into "internally persuasive word" (BAKHTIN, 1998). This enabled the emergence of bivocal discourses (BAKHTIN, 1998) and ambivalent practices whose interpretation is made possible through different perspectives. The example below shows an excerpt from an Indian writer, Kaka Werá Jecupé, which reveals the bivocality in the translation of "Tupa Tenondé" and its resistance against an Eurochristian rational perspective. This shows that the invisibility of Indigenous knowledge also works as a place of epistemic resistance:

> The First Great Sound – also called Tupã Tenondé, expression originated from the words tu (sound), pan (suffix indicating completeness), Tenondé (the first, the beginning) – was how in the sixteenth century the Tupinambá people tried to communicate to the foreign religious when they were asked about the Indigenous concept of God; yet [. . .] those who came across the Great Waters understood only a superficial aspect of that Almighty Thunder- Being'[18] (JECUPÉ, 2001, p. 33, our translation).

We believe that post-colonial critique of the modernity/coloniality paradigm may be strengthened by considering the narratives and individual experiences. The examples shown in this section work in favour of the argument on the process of invention of languages in the colonial context. This article is in line with contemporary discussion on the Indigenous colonial experience; such ideas were intensified in recent decades with the studies on Indigenous ways of writing (NEUMAN, 2007).

Although the concept of dispositif operates as a productive framework to understand colonialism, it can be problematic since it tends to focus on institutional discourses and practices. To understand the colonial experience one has to be confronted with contextualized speeches:

> […] reconstructing people's arguments about, justifications for, and interpretations of what they and others are doing would explain how social life proceeds. It would show that although the terms of their discourses

[17] *"[...] os resultados do transplante da religião europeia no imaginário indígena criavam, em última instância, uma terceira religião ou credo entre os nativos, que somente a situação colonial tornaria propícia"* (ALVES FILHO, 2008, p.97).

[18] "*O Grande Som Primeiro – também chamado Tupã Tenondé, expressão desdobrada das palavras tu (som), pan (sufixo indicador de totalidade), tenondé (primeiro, início) – era como no século XVI os Tupinambá tentaram comunicar aos religiosos estrangeiros quando eram interrogados a respeito do conceito indígena de Deus; no entanto [...] aqueles que vieram do outro lado das Grandes Águas entenderam apenas um aspecto superficial desse Altíssimo Ser-Trovão.*" (JECUPÉ, 2001, p.33).

may be set […] within these limits, people contest interpretations of what is happening, strategize, feel pain, and live their lives." (ABU-LUGHOD, 1991, p. 476).

Final remarks

Although this paper has focused on the Iberian colonial context of domination (Spain and Portugal), we believe that the comments made may surpass the colonial period. We consider that a post-colonial perspective is not chronologically identified with the post-independence period, since colonial power relations carry their epistemic, political and cultural memories. A historical and critical perspective helps us to understand the roots of the colonial discourse that are stil alive. It is, for example, when we are faced with the need for intercultural dialogue – as proposed by the Brazilian Law 11.645 on the inclusion of the theme "History and Afro-Brazilian Culture and Indigenous" in the school curriculum – that we are asked about the colonial history of Indigenous languages in Brazil. In line with the demands and policies experienced by the African context regarding their local languages, "[…] it is only now that the full implication of the work of missionaries is beginning to dawn on us" (MAKONI, 2003, p.141).

Finally, instead of providing a final conclusion to the reflections made in this article, we consider relevant to point out the importance of studies exploring colonial experience's echoes in contemporary academic practices. Examples of these studies – that can contribute to the reflections made in the Linguistic field – are the problematization, by Edward Said (1989) and Lila Abu-Lughod (1991), about the renewed interest in the description and understanding of other cultures:

> Is there not an assumption on our part that our destiny is that we should rule and lead the world, a role that we have assigned to ourselves as part of our errands into the wilderness? (SAID, 1989, p.216)

> We need to ask questions about the historical processes by which it came to pass that people like ourselves could be engaged in anthropological studies of people like those […] We need to ask what this "will to knowledge" about the Other is connected to in the world. (ABU-LUGHOD, 1991, p.473)

SEVERO, C. A invenção colonial das línguas da América. **Alfa**, São Paulo, v.60, n.1, p.11-27, 2016.

▪ *RESUMO: Trata-se de uma proposta que visa discorrer criticamente sobre o processo colonial de discursivização das línguas na América. Considera-se que tal discursivização integrou*

o dispositivo colonial ibérico, centrado na Espanha e em Portugal, a partir do século XVI. O texto apresenta e discute a maneira como as línguas e os povos foram discursivizados a partir de uma matriz de poder centrada na lógica da modernidade/colonialidade. São tomados como exemplos dessa discursivização a produção de gramáticas, dicionários, listas de palavras, catecismos, além de uma profusão de traduções de gêneros europeus religiosos e administrativos para o contexto não-europeu. Defende-se que a discursivização colonial implicou o enquadramento dos povos e línguas em uma chave de interpretação eurocêntrica, gerando efeitos ainda vivos contemporaneamente. O artigo apoia-se no referencial teórico da Linguística colonial e da Crítica pós-colonial latino americana, ambas focadas em um olhar histórico e discursivo sobre as práticas coloniais. Considera-se, por fim, que a experiência colonial é complexa, o que significa que o encontro colonial produziu também a emergência de resistências e hibridizações culturais.

■ PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Línguas indígenas. Português. Espanhol. Colonização. América. Missões cristãs.

REFERENCES

ABU-LUGHOD, L. Writing Against Culture. In: FOX, R. G. (Org.). **Recapturing Anthropology:** Working in the Present. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1991. p.466-479.

ALVES FILHO, P. E. **Tradução e sincretismo nas obras de José de Anchieta**. Thesis (Doctor in Letras) – Departamento de Língua Inglesa e Literaturas Inglesa e Norte-Americana, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2008.

ANCHIETA, J. de. **Cartas***: informações, fragmentos históricos e sermões. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1933.

ANDRADE, V. M. Baeta: Livro de saúde Maxakali Curar. In: ALMEIDA, M. I. de (Org.). **Hitupma'ax / Curar**. Belo Horizonte: Ed. da UFMG: Edições Cipó Voador, 2008. p.5-30.

AUROUX, S. **A revolução tecnológica da gramatização**. 2.ed. Campinas: Ed. da Unicamp, 2009.

BAKHTIN, M. O discurso no romance (1934-35). In: _____. **Questões de Literatura e de Estética:** a teoria do romance. São Paulo: Ed. da Unesp, 1998. p.71-164.

CÂMARA, Jr. J. M. Línguas europeias de ultramar: O português do Brasil. In: UCHÔA, C. E. F. (Org.). **Dispersos de J. Mattoso Câmara Jr**. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. da FGV, 1975. p.71-93.

COLOMBO, C. **Diários da descoberta da América**. Porto Alegre: L&PM, 1984.

COOPER, F.; STOLER, A. L. **Tensions of Empire:** colonial cultures in a bourgeois world. California: University of California Press, 1997.

COMBY, J. **Para ler a história da Igreja II:** do século XV ao século XX. v.2. 2.ed. São Paulo: Loyola, 2001.

DEUMERT, A. Imbodelazamakhumsha: Reflections on Standardization and Destandardization. **Multilingua***, Berlin, v.29, p. 243-264, 2010.

ERRINGTON, J. Colonial Linguistics. **Annual Review of Anthropology**, Palo Alto, v.30, p.19-39, 2001.

FARDON, R.; FURNISS, G. **African languages, development and the state***. London; New York: Routledge, 1993.

FOUCAULT, M. **A história da sexualidade I:** a vontade de saber. 13.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1999a.

_____. Sobre a história da sexualidade. In: _____. **Microfísica do poder**. 14.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1999b. p.243-276.

_____. **A ordem do discurso**. São Paulo: Loyola, 1996.

GALEANO, E. **As veias abertas da América Latina**. Porto Alegre: L&PM, 2014.

GUILLERMOU, A. **Santo Inácio de Loyola e a Companhia de Jesus**. Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Agir, 1973.

HUE, S. M. **As primeiras cartas do Brasil (1551-1555).** Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 2006.

JECUPÉ, K. W. **Tupã Tenondé**: a criação do Universo, da Terra e do Homem segundo a tradição oral Guarani. São Paulo: Petrópolis, 2001.

HUMBOLDT, W. von. Sobre a natureza da língua em geral. In: HEIDERMANN, W.; WEININGER, M. J. (Org.). **Wilhem von Humboldt:** Linguagem, Literatura, Bildung. Florianópolis: Ed. da UFSC, 2006. p. 2-19.

IRVINE, J. Subjected words: African linguistics and the colonial encounter. **Language and Communication**, Kidlington, v.28, p.323–324, 2008.

LEITE, I. B. (Org.). **Negros no Sul do Brasil:** invisibilidade e territorialidade. Florianópolis: Letras Contemporâneas, 1996.

LOURENÇO, E. A mitologia dos descobrimentos (segundo João de Barros). **Portuguese Studies**, Cambridge, v.8, p.86–92, 1992.

MAHER, T. de J. Políticas Linguísticas e Políticas de Identidade: currículo e representações de professores indígenas na Amazônia Ocidental brasileira. **Currículo sem Fronteiras,** n.10, p. 33–48, 2010.

MAKONI, S. From misinvention to disinvention of language: multilingualism and the South African Constitution. In: BALL, A. (Org.). **Black Linguistics:** Language, Society and Politics in Africa and the Americas. New York: Routledge, 2003. p.132-151.

MAKONI, S.; PENNYCOOK, A. (Org.). **Disinventingand Reconstituting Languages**. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2006.

MAKONI, S.; MEINHOF, U. Western perspectives in applied linguistics in Africa. **AILA Review**, Amsterdam, v.17, p. 77-105, 2004.

MARIANI, B. S. C. Políticas de colonização lingüística. **Letras**, Santa Maria, RS, n.27, p. 73-82, 2003. Available at: <http://cascavel.ufsm.br/revistas/ojs-2.2.2/index.php/letras/article/view/11900/7322>. Accessed on: 11 mar. 2016.

MIGNOLO, W. D. **La idea de América Latina**: La herida colonial y la opción de colonial. Barcelona: Gedisa Editorial, 2005.

MUNDURUKU, D. Literatura indígena e o tênue fio entre escrita e oralidade. **Overmundo**, Lorena, 2008. Available at: <http://www.overmundo.com.br/overblog/literatura-indigena>. Accessed on: 20 mar. 2016.

NAVARRO, E. de A. Anchieta, Literato y Humanista. **Língua e Literatura**, São Paulo, v.29, p. 188-203, 2011.

_____. O Reino deste Mundo: O Padroado e seus Reflexos nas Cartas de José de Anchieta. **Teresa**, São Paulo, v.8, n.9, p. 237-250, 2008.

NELLES, P. Chancillería em colegio: la producción y circulación de papeles jesuítas em el siglo XVI. **Cuadernos de Historia Moderna**, Madrid, Anejo XIII, p.49-70, 2014. Available at: <https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/CHMO/article/download/46789/43904>. Accessed on: 14 mar. 2016.

NEUMANN, E. S. A escrita dos guaranis nas reduções: usos e funções das formas textuais indígenas: século XVIII. **Topoi**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 8, n. 15, p. 49-79, jul./dez. 2007. Available at: <http://www.revistatopoi.org/numeros_anteriores/topoi15/topoi%2015%20-%20artigo3.pdf>. Accessed on: 14 mar. 2016.

NOBREGA, M. da. **Cartas do Brasil e mais escritos do Pe. Manuel da Nóbrega**. Anotações e prefácio de Serafim Leite. Coimbra: Ed. da Universidade de Coimbra, 1955.

O'GORMAN, E. **La invención de América**: investigación acerca de la estructura histórica del nuevo mundo y del sentido de sudevenir. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1958.

OLIVEIRA, M. A. de. Entre a coroa e a cruz: a igreja colonial sob a égide do padroado. **Mneme:** Revista de Humanidades, Caicó, RN, v.9, n.24, p.1-14, 2008.

PHILLIPSON, R. **Linguistic Imperialism**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

QUIJANO, A. Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina. In: LANDER, E. **Colonialidad del saber, eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales**. Buenos Aires: CLACSO-UNESCO, 2000. p. 201-245. Available at: <http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/clacso/sur-sur/20100708034410/lander.pdf>. Accessed on: 14 mar. 2016.

REZENDE, T. F. Entre a senzala, o tijupá e a escola: a questão linguístico-identitária entre as/os tapuia do Carretão-Goiás. In: CONGRESSO LUSO-AFRO-BRASILEIRO DE CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS, 11., Salvador. **Proceedings...** Salvador, 2011. p. 1-16.

SAID, E. Representing the colonized: Anthropology's interlocutors. **Critical Inquiry**, Chicago, v.15, n.2, p.205–225, 1989.

SEVERO, C. G.; MAKONI, S. B. Discourses of Language in Colonial and Postcolonial Brazil. **Language & Communication**, Oxford, v.34, p. 95-104, 2014. Available at: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0271530913000682>. Accessed on: 14 mar. 2016.

SEVERO, C. G. A diversidade linguística como questão de governo. **Calidoscópio**, São Leopoldo, RS, v.1, p. 107-115, 2013.

SPENCER, J. W. Colonial language policies in Sub-Saharan Africa. In: FISHMAN, J. (Ed.). **Advances in language planning**. Netherlands: Mounton & Co., 1974. p.163-176.

WELMERS, W. E. Christian missions and Language Policies in Africa. In: FISHMAN, J. (Ed.). **Advances in language planning**. Netherlands: Mounton & Co., 1974. p.191-204.